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DE RUEHGO #0290 1160941
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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7438
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1086
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4634
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8174
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5735
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3615
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1489
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000290

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STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/20/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMESE REGIME OFFERS ASSK A VOTE, BUT NOT FREEDOM

Classified By: Pol Officer Sean O'Neill for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) Two separate sources reported that regime officials visited Aung San Suu Kyi this week to offer her the right to vote in May's referendum. Imprisoned activist Su Su Nwe declined authorities' offer of a new national registration card that would allow her to vote. The regime continued to arrest Rakhine State NLD members and has detained over 60 activists in that state since April 13.

AUNG SAN SUU KYI

12. (C) The person who purchases and delivers Aung San Suu Kyi's (ASSK) daily food told us regime officials visited the NLD leader on April 21 to offer her the opportunity to vote in the May 10 referendum. The visit took place the same day the NLD released a statement demanding the regime permit senior party officials to vote. Separately, another reliable NLD source reported the visit to us and added that ASSK had accepted a ballot from the visiting officials, but had made no comment about it. ASSK's food buyer has daily access to her house and has been a reliable source of information in the past. She often passes messages through him to other political activists outside of the NLD.

SU SU NWE

13. (C) A leading NLD youth activist told us authorities also offered detained activist Su Su Nwe a national registration card (NRC) that would allow her to vote. According to our source, Su Su Nwe already had an NRC but was told by officials she would need a new one in order to vote. She declined their offer.

ARRESTS

14. (SBU) Our contacts confirmed that authorities arrested Rakhine State NLD member Ko Zaw Naing this week. His fellow

NLD members Ko Than Htay, Ko Aung Naing Min, and Ko Moe Kyaw were detained on March 27 and 28 for allegedly distributing the Rakhine State NLD's "vote no" pamphlets. The four activists have been charged with trespassing, intimidation, and use of abusive language. Additionally, our sources confirmed that at least 60 persons have been arrested in Sittwe, Rakhine State since April 13, including during the Thingyan water festival. Of these, approximately 40 remained in detention while 20 had been released.

COMMENT

15. (C) Offering political prisoners such as Aung San Suu Kyi and Su Su Nwe the opportunity to vote is the right thing to do, but does little to overcome the litany of abuses the Than Shwe regime continues to commit to ensure the referendum lacks credibility. What would count for real progress is if Aung San Suu Kyi and fifty million of her fellow citizens could freely debate and participate in a genuine democratic process, and the process would take place in a transparent manner.

VILLAROSA